

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

JOHN D. LASLAU,

Plaintiff,

CASE NO. 16-CV-11372

v.

DISTRICT JUDGE MARK A. GOLDSMITH
MAGISTRATE JUDGE PATRICIA T. MORRIS

COMMISSIONER OF
SOCIAL SECURITY,

Defendant.

_____ /

**MAGISTRATE JUDGE'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION ON
PLAINTIFF'S APPLICATION TO PROCEED *IN FORMA PAUPERIS***

(Doc. 2)

I. RECOMMENDATION

For the reasons set forth below, **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that Plaintiff's Application to Proceed *In Forma Pauperis* be **DENIED**.

II. REPORT

A. Introduction

Pending, pursuant to an order of reference for general case management from United States District Judge Mark A. Goldsmith issued on April 15, 2016 (Doc. 3), is Plaintiff's Application to Proceed *In Forma Pauperis*. (Doc. 2.) This report and

recommendation is filed pursuant to *Woods v. Dahlberg*, 894 F.2d 187 (6th Cir. 1990) (holding that magistrate judges lack authority to deny pauper status).

B. Governing Law

Since 1892, federal courts have possessed statutory power under 28 U.S.C. § 1915 to authorize commencement of civil actions *in forma pauperis* (“IFP”). Section 1915 is intended to insure that indigent persons have equal access to the judicial system by allowing them to proceed without having to advance the fees and costs associated with litigation. *Flint v. Haynes*, 651 F.2d 970, 972 (4th Cir. 1981). An indigent litigant seeking to proceed IFP must file an affidavit that includes a statement of that person’s assets and his inability to pay fees. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1). If the court grants the motion to proceed IFP, the litigant is excused from prepayment of filing fees. *Id.* A court may also direct the United States to pay expenses associated with printing records and transcripts, *id.* § 1915(c), and will order court officers to carry out duties associated with service of process. *Id.* § 1915(d).

In *Adkins v. E.I. DuPont de Nemours, Inc.*, 335 U.S. 331, 69 S. Ct. 85, 93 L. Ed. 43 (1948), the United States Supreme Court held that one need not be absolutely destitute to enjoy the benefit of proceeding IFP. *See also Lee v. McDonald’s Corp.*, 231 F.3d 456, 458 (8th Cir. 2000). An affidavit to proceed IFP is sufficient if it states that one cannot, because of his or her poverty, afford to pay for costs of litigation and still provide herself and her family the necessities of life. *Adkins*, 335 U.S. at 339. Proceeding IFP “is a privilege, not a right, and permission to so proceed is committed to the sound discretion of the court.” *Camp v. Oliver*, 798 F.2d 434, 437 (11th Cir. 1986).

In determining IFP eligibility, “courts will generally look to whether the persons are employed, the person’s annual salary, and any other property or assets the person may possess.” *Schneller v. Prospect Park Nursing & Rehab. Ctr.*, No. 06-545, 2006 WL 1030284, at *1 (E.D. Pa. Apr. 18, 2006). Assets include equity in real estate and automobiles. *United States v. Valdez*, 300 F. Supp. 2d 82, 84 (D. D. C. 2004). In addition, “[f]ederal courts, which are charged with evaluating IFP Applications, have consistently considered not only an IFP applicant’s personal income, but also his or her other financial resources, including the resources that could be made available from the applicant’s spouse, or other family members.” *Helland v. St. Mary’s Duluth Clinic Health System*, No. 10-31 (RHK/RLE), 2010 WL 502781, at *1, n.1 (D. Minn. Feb. 5, 2010); *accord Shahin v. Sec’y of Delaware*, 532 F. App’x 123 (3rd Cir. 2013) (holding district court did not abuse its discretion in requiring plaintiff to disclose spouse’s assets); *Caldwell v. Providence Family Physician (Tillman’s Corner) Seton Medical Management*, 2005 WL 1027287, *2 (S.D. Ala. Apr. 29, 2005) (the ability to cover the costs of litigation and the necessities of life “has consistently depended in part on [the] litigant’s actual ability to get funds from a spouse, a parent, and adult sibling or other next friend.”); *Fridman v. City of New York*, 195 F. Supp. 2d 534, 537 (S.D.N.Y. 2002) (courts consider “the resources that the applicant has or ‘can get’ from those who ordinarily provide the applicant with the necessities of life,” such as ‘from a spouse, parent, adult sibling, or other next friend.’”).

C. Plaintiff's Affidavit

Plaintiff indicates that he has not been employed since 2007. (Doc. 2, at Pg. ID 41.) He crossed out the words "I am unable" in the standard application language declaring that he cannot pay the cost of these proceedings, and handwrote "I have no job & I should not waste my lifetime savings." (*Id.*) He indicated that he has received interest payments in the past twelve months, but declined to disclose the source of such income writing "Lifetime 'savings & interest' is not public information!" (*Id.*) He also declined to disclose the amount of money he has, any assets that he owns, his regular monthly expenses, any dependents and the amount he contributes to their support, and any debts or financial obligations that he may have. (*Id.* at Pg ID 42.) Plaintiff indicated that this information is private and wrote "I should not have to pay to find out if the treating doctors or [social security] hired ALJ's lie!!!"

D. Analysis and Conclusion

Since Plaintiff has chosen to withhold his financial information, I suggest that Plaintiff has not demonstrated that, because of his poverty, he is unable to pay for the costs of his litigation and still provide for himself. Plaintiff is not required to disclose this information, and may instead choose to pay the costs of these proceedings himself. Accordingly, I suggest that Plaintiff's application be denied.

III. REVIEW

Pursuant to Rule 72(b)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, "[w]ithin 14 days after being served with a copy of the recommended disposition, a party may serve and file specific written objections to the proposed findings and recommendations. A

party may respond to another party's objections within 14 days after being served with a copy." Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b)(2); *see also* 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1.) Failure to file specific objections constitutes a waiver of any further right of appeal. *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140, 106 S. Ct. 466, 88 L. Ed.2d 435 (1985); *Howard v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, 932 F.2d 505 (6th Cir. 1991); *United States v. Walters*, 638 F.2d 947 (6th Cir. 1981.) The parties are advised that making some objections, but failing to raise others, will not preserve all the objections a party may have to this Report and Recommendation. *Willis v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, 931 F.2d 390, 401 (6th Cir. 1991); *Smith v. Detroit Fed'n of Teachers Local 231*, 829 F.2d 1370, 1373 (6th Cir. 1987). Pursuant to E.D. Mich. LR 72.1(d)(2), a copy of any objections is to be served upon this magistrate judge.

Any objections must be labeled as "Objection No. 1," "Objection No. 2," etc. Any objection must recite precisely the provision of this Report and Recommendation to which it pertains. Not later than 14 days after service of an objection, the opposing party may file a concise response proportionate to the objections in length and complexity. Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b)(2); E.D. Mich. LR 72.1(d.) The response must specifically address each issue raised in the objections, in the same order, and labeled as "Response to Objection No. 1," "Response to Objection No. 2," etc. If the Court determines that any objections are without merit, it may rule without awaiting the response.

Date: April 20, 2016

S/ PATRICIA T. MORRIS

Patricia T. Morris

United States Magistrate Judge

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing document was electronically filed this date through the Court's CM/ECF system which delivers a copy to all counsel of record. A copy was also sent via First Class Mail to John D. Laslau at 4600 Saint Lawrence Street, Detroit, MI 48210.

Date: April 20, 2016

By s/Kristen Krawczyk
Case Manager